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NBC spy report said to have little new in it

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WASHINGTON — The NBC News report on U.S. submarine surveillance inside Soviet harbors contained little new or damaging information, intelligence experts said Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the Justice Department said it hadn't received an official request by CIA Director William Casey to prosecute NBC, under a 1950 espionage law, for its Monday Today show report.

And officials of *The Washington Post*, under a similar threat by Casey, said they were still weighing whether to run a story Casey has said would threaten national security.

"I'm sure the Russians have learned nothing new," said

James Bamford, who wrote *The Puzzle Palace*, an authoritative book on the government's supersecret National Security Agency.

"This information has been circulating around Washington for months," added Allan Adler of the American Civil Liberties Union's Center for National Security Studies.

NBC's James Polk had reported that spy suspect Ronald Pelton, a former NSA employee on trial in Baltimore, was suspected of providing the Soviets with information about the so-called "Ivy Bells" submarine surveillance project.

The code name "Ivy Bells" surfaced in public Nov. 27 during a pretrial proceeding. One of Pelton's attorneys asked an FBI agent if Pelton had been questioned about it. Polk's re-

port that day was substantially the same as Monday's.

Reaction Tuesday:

■ "Casey has had the best possible victory already," said Jane Kirtley of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press. "He has restrained the press without having to go to court to justify it."

■ Columnist Jack Anderson said Casey was trying to intimidate. "It's obviously an attempt to manage the news," he said.

■ In defense, former CIA Director Stansfield Turner said the prosecution demand was "excellent."

■ Senate Intelligence Committee chairman David Durenberger, R-Minn., said "both the leaker and the leakee (the press) ought to pay some price" if national security was damaged.